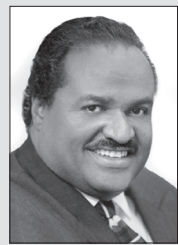




Trips overseas bring jobs back home



Every now and then, you'll read a headline that says an overseas business trip was a success for the city. You may ask yourself what that means.

It means there are business leaders in other countries who are seriously considering the city of Akron as the location for their next major business investment. It means there's a possibility for more jobs for Akron citizens and a growing economy for our city.

I've witnessed the impact of these face-to-face meetings firsthand. Like any job seeker, we have to choose to go on interviews or sit back and wait for someone to hire us. We can't hope that people are going to bring jobs to Akron. We must be proactive and actively solicit new business in Akron.

Developing business deals outside of the country has been a common practice of large and port cities for many years. When we take the time to build relationships with global business leaders, we're working to position Akron to be included when companies expand into America.

Countries like Germany, Finland, China and India are emerging in various industries. It's vital to build relationships with their leaders and develop a level of comfort and trust.

During our meetings, we promote Akron as a viable city for any business looking to do manufacturing in the United States. Akron is near large bodies of water, we have sufficient land and most importantly, we have great people. Akron has all of the ingredients necessary to operate a successful business.

The benefits of our business trips are evident when Akron is placed in the running for new business opportunities. Currently, Akron is one of three cities being considered by German manufacturing company to be the location for a 75,000 square-foot manufacturing plant. If Akron is chosen, this deal would bring \$4.9 million in annual payroll to our city.

Although we've been able to negotiate creative financial deals with major employers like Goodyear and Firestone, the days of relying solely on them for economic development and employment have come and gone.

The world is flat, and wealth is spread across it. It is imperative to Akron's future that we engage in open discussions and develop relationships with international business leaders.

City Council and the Mayor care very much about the future of Akron, and we'll continue to do everything in our power to ensure its success.



City and community leaders unite to show support for the Criminal Expungement Program, announced at a press conference at the University of Akron School of Law. L to R: Council President Marco Sommerville, Rev. Melford J. Elliot, Rev. William C. Bunton, Attorney Aviva Wilcher, Sen. Tom Sawyer and Ward 4 Councilman Russell C. Neal Jr.

University and city collaborate to create Criminal Expungement Program

The City of Akron and The University of Akron School of Law are collaborating to create a Criminal Expungement Program through the school's Legal Clinic.

City Council approved \$10,000 to fund the program that will help Akron residents clear crimes from their records.

"A felony conviction dashes dreams and leaves limited options. It can be a 'Scarlet Letter' that stays with someone for the rest of their life," City Council President Marco Sommerville said.

"It is a barrier to employment, and unemployment leads to more crime in what is a vicious cycle. If we can remove this barrier, we hope we can break the cycle."

Criminal records prevent citizens from obtaining jobs, finding suitable housing and becoming productive members of the community. The result is higher unemployment and more crime, especially in the African-

American population where one in three males are involved with the criminal justice system in some capacity, and one in seven males are in jail.

Sommerville represents Akron's Ward 3, which has a 65 percent African-American population.

"We understand that there needs to be consequences for breaking the law - go to jail, do community service or pay a fine. But it doesn't end there, and sometimes it should," he said.

Akron attorney Aviva Wilcher is the director of the Expungement Program. She will guide 20

University of Akron law students who will help eligible applicants complete the expungement process.

"This program aims to give people a second chance and a new opportunity," Wilcher said.

Students who have earned a legal intern certificate will represent applicants in court under the supervision of Wilcher. The time involved in expungement cases varies based on the offense.

On average, misdemeanors can take up to six weeks to have a hearing and felonies can take up to six months.

Expungement is a legal process that seals the public record of a court conviction and prevents someone from finding it. Many misdemeanor and felony convictions are eligible for expungement.

Convictions that are not eligible for expungement include crimes with a mandatory prison term, offenses of violence and any crime where the victim was a minor under the age of 18 years old.

Wilcher said expungement has been a right for many years, but many haven't pursued the option because of the cumbersome paperwork and fees involved.

To be eligible for representation through the Expungement Program, a citizen must be an Akron resident for at least one year and meet certain income requirements. For more information on eligibility and services, citizens may call the Legal Clinic 330-972-7751.

To be eligible for representation through the Criminal Expungement Program, a citizen must have an eligible conviction or dismissal, be an Akron resident for at least one year and meet certain income requirements.

For more information and to check eligibility, call 330-972-7751.

Yearlong review of Akron Police concluded

After a 12-month study of the Akron Police Department, the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) released a report with 32 recommendations for improvement.

The common threads between the recommendations are a focus on community policing and increased efficiency in the deployment of officers.

The recommendations include: re-establish community-oriented policing as a guiding philosophy, establish a Citizens Advisory Board to meet regularly with the Chief of Police and staff and pursue alternative methods of responding to public's service demand.

The report describes the police department as a "good agency" that is "committed to providing quality police services to the community." PERF declared there was no need for a large overhaul of the police department, rather a need for a few adjustments and enhancements. The forum made 32 key recommendations to improve the department's operations.

Dr. Craig Fraser, director of PERF's Management Services group, said he was impressed with what he's seen in the Akron Police Department. Fraser commented that the Akron police are a solid department with a legacy of integrity and excellent

service to Akron residents.

The report, released in December, is the result of a contract the city entered with PERF in November 2009 to review the policies and procedures of the police department.

"Our main focus is keeping our community safe with effective policing," said Council President Marco Sommerville. "We appreciate the suggestions PERF has made. Safety is a top concern for our city and we'll do whatever we can to better our safety forces."

PERF is a non-profit organization based in Washington, D.C. dedicated to improving policing and advancing professionalism

through research and involvement in public policy. The organization gathered information for its study by conducting one-on-one interviews, reviewing departmental documents and evaluating the department's actions.

PERF also engaged the community through meetings with the Mayor's Task Force on Neighborhood Policing, which was brought together especially for the study. The task force was comprised of civic leaders and block club representatives.

To view the full PERF report, visit www.ci.akron.oh.us/news_releases.

City makes pitch to German auto supplier

City Council passed legislation on Monday, Jan. 11, that will give 12 acres of city-owned land and about \$50,000 a year in tax rebates to Roechling Automotive if the German manufacturer builds an automotive plastics plant in Akron.

Roechling, a global manufacturer of high-performance plastic auto parts, named Akron as one of three cities competing for a new 75,000 square-foot manufacturing plant. The plant will employ 115 people with a combined annual salary of \$4.9 million.

Council President Marco Sommerville said city officials learned of Roechling's interest in expanding operations in America at a trade show they attended in Germany. He also used the opportunity to counter those who have criticized the administration's overseas travel in search of partnerships.

"We're in a fight for jobs," he said. "This opportunity is the result of a trip to Germany. We have to continue to be proactive and find jobs for our residents, not just wait for them."

The land Council set aside is in the Massillon Road Industrial Park. Council also agreed to give Roechling first right of refusal on five additional, adjacent acres. The tax rebate Council offered is 1 percent of the payroll for five years.

Roechling operates 54 facilities in 20 countries and has approximately 6,000 employees. Council expects that their offer, and the speed in which it was passed, will give Akron a competitive edge.

Community leaders work to streamline services for seniors



Linda Omobien Councilwoman At Large

Councilwoman At Large Linda F. R. Omobien is serving on the Social Services Advisory Board where

services for senior citizens are being discussed by a number of agency leaders. Summit County Executive Russ Pry recently convened the board to talk about services for senior citizens, and elder abuse emerged as one critical area to address.

Elder abuse refers to intentional or neglectful acts by a caregiver or trusted individual that lead to harm. Physical, emotional and psychological abuse; neglect; verbal abuse and threats; financial abuse and exploitation; sexual abuse; and abandonment are forms of elder abuse.

"Our goal is to coordinate the

services for senior citizens and find ways to communicate what is available in our communities," said Omobien. "Summit County has an array of services for senior citizens. The concern is how do citizens find them when they are needed."

Many local agencies offer services including in-home care, home delivered meals and protective services for senior citizens. Some of these agencies are: Summit County Adult Protective Services 330-643-7217, Area Agency on Aging 10B, Inc. 330-896-9172 and Mature Services 330-253-4597.

The board will continue to meet periodically to find the most effective way to streamline services, Omobien said. Those who need assistance may call any of the agencies above or contact Summit County's Community Resource Info Line by dialing 2-1-1. For more information on elder abuse, visit www.ncea.aoa.gov.

UPCOMING WARD MEETINGS

Ward 1:
March 16; 6:30 p.m.
Patterson Park
Community Center

Ward 6:
Feb. 24; 7 p.m.
Ellet Community Center

Ward 2:
Feb. 24; 6:30 p.m.
Forest Hill Learning
Community Center

Ward 7:
Feb. 23; 7 p.m.
Firestone Park
Community Center

Ward 3:
Feb. 26; 10 a.m.
Ed Davis Community Center

Ward 8:
Feb. 16; 6:30 p.m.
Northwest Community Center

Ward 4:
Feb. 1; 7 p.m.
Lawton Street
Community Center

Ward 9:
Feb. 1; 7 p.m.
Kenmore Senior
Community Center

Ward 5:
Feb. 2; 6 p.m.
East Akron Community House

Ward 10:
Feb. 8; 6:30 p.m.
Goodyear Branch, Akron
Summit Public Library

Feb. 3; 6 p.m.
The Mayflower Building

Feb. 24; 6 p.m.
Findley Community
Learning Center

For a full list of 2011 ward meetings, visit www.akroncitycouncil.org.